

King Richard, A Tragedy



Arthur Hoppe

A YELLOWED MANUSCRIPT, believed to be a fragment of a long-lost Shakespeare tragedy, has been found under a mossy rock at Stratford-on-Avon.

It appears to be Part Two of a play called, "King Richard."

(Scene: the battlements of Richard's White Castle. Enter Richard, the Lords Haldeman, Ehrlichman, and Mitchell and the young Dean of John amidst trumpets and flourishes.)

Mitchell: Now twice, My Liege, your exult people have crowned thy noble brow; and sweet power thine, to which all men's juices flow.

Richard: And thine, my Lords. We shall together sip the cup for it doth overflow; now that we by plots and masterstrokes have brought the Mack of Govern low.

(Distant excursions and alarums)

Richard: Hark! Who disturbs my honored peace? Go, thee, Mitchell, and from my tangled cares bring soft surcease. Take thee thine army and espy upon the land.

Mitchell: Aye, My Liege. (exeunt Mitchell)

Richard: And, thou, trusted Dean, hie thee to the Watergate; its keeping lies in thy sacred care. For the sharp-tongued enemy frenzies all about and I sense a weakness there.

Dean: My life is thine, My Liege! (exeunt Dean)

Richard: Yond Dean has a lean and hungry look. Let me have about me sleek-headed men, and such as sleep o' nights.

(Enter Queen Pat with a small spotted dog)

The Queen: Beware the Ides of March, My Lord. Beware the Ides of March.

Richard: All powerful rule I now, following but my royal star. Come, My Lords, to keep my honored peace, we

must off to war. As for sickly fear, My Lady, I know it not; and as for your dog, I say, Out! Out, damned Spot!

ACT II

(Scene: The battlements. Enter Richard, the Thane of Haig and the Laird of Melvin.)

Richard: Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell? Wherefore art thou, Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell?

Haig: Gone, Sire. When the enemy, baying like hounds to the hunt, burst through the Watergate...

Laird: Some say thy Lords are captured. Some say they have to safety fled. But we remaining two, while God's breath lasts, will guard your royal head.

Richard: Good men and true. And the young Dean? Perished he in youth's blossom?

Haig: Nay, Sire. He did betray thee, opening the gates to the enemy and...

Richard: And my war? Say it, at least, goes well.

Laird: 'Tis ended. Perfidious Parliament did cut all funds...

Richard: This was the most unkindest cut of all. O! Now, forever farewell the plumed troop and the big wars that made ambition virtue. Farewell! To be King or not to be King: that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the barbs and shafts of outraged calumnists...

(Excursions and alarums. Enter the young Dean and the Lords Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, Magruder, McCord, Hunt, Abplanalp, et al, with drawn daggers.)

Dean (as they all stab): 'Tis better to be hung for a sheep than a scapegoat.

Richard (sinking to his knees): Et tu, Alpa... Alba...

Abplanalp: Abplanalp, damn it. You never could get things straight.